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Hoary vervain (*Verbena stricta*) Q. Edwards

January 2022

SEEDLINGS

Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

**What more substantial service to conservation than to
practice it on one's own land?--Aldo Leopold**

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Moss & Turkey Tail (Bryophyta & Trametes) M. Luna

Dear ***|FNAME|***,

Welcome to the first Seedlings newsletter of 2022! Tom Small heralds in the month of January with a beautiful piece about the mighty, mystical oak. Please join us to celebrate Tom's years of service in a [Zoom event](#) in his honor on January 9th!

This month we're encouraging you to try your hand at sowing some native seeds over the winter (you can do it!), attend our first program of the year (on Zoom) with Dr. Rebecca Tonietto on the 26th, and grab a good book to get cozy with as the weather turns colder. I know I'm looking at mosses differently after reading [Gathering Moss](#) by Robin Wall-Kimmerer, and everything differently after reading Doug Tallamy.

Lastly, don't miss Ilse's short piece about a species of wasp who builds clay pots to house its offspring. The world is truly a wonderland of innovation and inspiration! Let's go see what we can find...

Winter blessings,
Mel Luna
Editor

Choosing Plants for Pollinators

Jan 26, 7pm on Zoom

Rebecca Tonietto, *Department of Biology, University of Michigan-Flint*

"I love talking to people about bees, and investigating how we can best support them. In general, providing habitat for native bees really means making places more beautiful – with more flowers and more species of flowering plants."

Dr. Tonietto will be sharing her knowledge and passion for Michigan's native pollinators in our first program of 2022! [Learn more](#). This is a wonderful start to the season, getting us dreaming of all we can do to welcome back our littlest friends in the spring. Register (always free!) to join the Zoom [here](#).



Bumblebee with Culver's Root (Bombus with Veronicastrum virginicum) N. Nickson

[Visit Our YouTube Channel](#)

If you've missed any of our previous presentations, not to worry. Visit the KAWO YouTube channel, where you can view our programs at your convenience.

[Click Here to visit our YouTube channel](#)

You can also click on the small red YouTube icon above, underneath the Table of Contents.

Winter Sowing: Plant Propagation Workshop

Mel Luna

KAWO is teaming up with Western Michigan University on **Saturday, January 29th** to present a free, in-person plant propagation workshop on WMU's campus. It's being offered in two parts, with a seminar portion in the morning and a greenhouse portion in the afternoon. ***If you have signed up but cannot attend, please cancel your registration to open a seat.*** Currently both sections

are full, but spaces may open up. **Registration Instructions - Click >>>[Register Here](#)**
And if you can't get into this event, don't despair. Jon Warner will show you the ropes *today!*



Start your native plants from seeds this winter! That message came through loud and clear from Jon Warner during his winter sowing demonstration sponsored by the Portage Public Library.

Good news is - it's not too late!

All you need are seeds (PDL has them in their [seed library](#)), recycled plastic containers, a seed-starting mix, an uncovered outdoor area preferably on the ground, and a little patience! Curious to learn more? Check out his full presentation on the library's website [here](#).

Jon Warner demonstrating winter sowing. M. Luna

Plant of the New Year: Oak

Tom Small

The oak tree guards the door of the year. The oak and Janus, the Roman two-faced god, who looks both ways, are alike. Both god and tree see what is past, and passing, and to come. Both have for thousands of years been worshipped as the doorway through which all things come into being, pass away, and return. Both are entryways to the Otherworld, offering access to special knowledge.

Janus, holding the key to new beginnings and the staff for guiding travelers. Guillaume de La Perriere, 1539



More than simply alike, they're associated in ancient tradition with beginnings, endings, and ongoing cycles of the seasons. For the Romans, Janus must be invoked at the beginning of every prayer and sacred occasion, no matter the main deity to be honored. For ancient Greeks, Romans, Celts, Norse, Native Americans, and even ourselves, oak is the elder, the mother tree, the source of wisdom.

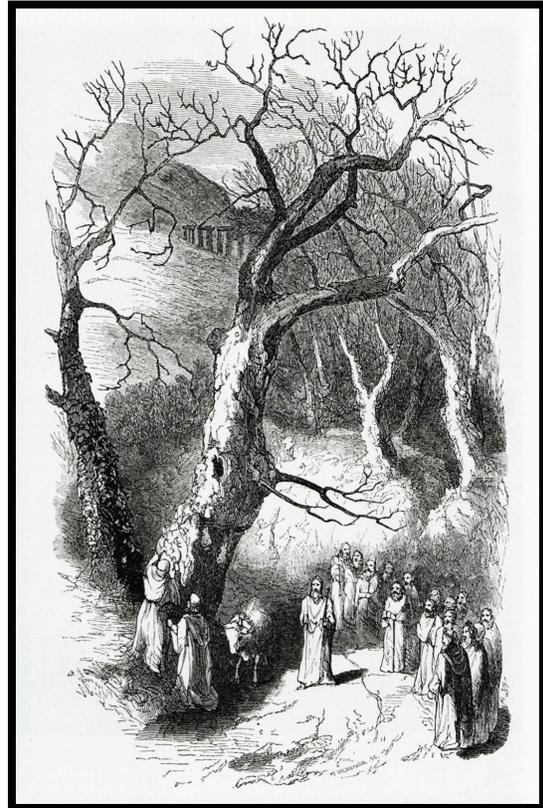
In a very ancient Indo-European and Greek myth, following the universal flood and Deucalion's renewal of the human race from the "bones" of her mother, the earth, her first action is to ascend to

the oak forests of Dodona and establish the oracle of Dione, later the oracle of Zeus (Jupiter), which would last until the fall of Rome. The oracular voices of origins and endings are the whisperings of wind in the oak leaves.

For the Celts, oaks were sacred, and the Druids were guardians of the door to the Otherworld. The Indo-European root word *dwher* becomes *duir*, the letter D in the Celtic tree alphabet and the word for oak. A Druid is *duir-wid*, Celtic for oak-seer. No other tree known to the Celts had both evergreen and deciduous species. So oaks, and Druids, could see both ways: evergreen oaks watched over the old, waning year; deciduous oaks over the new, budding year. Together, they insured that life could endure the winter and be renewed. Together, they are the doorway of passage and transition. Indeed, our modern English word “door” comes from the same ancient root, *duir*, and symbolizes the same idea, a portal through which we pass from one space to another, or even one world to another.

Druids harvesting mistletoe from oak trees.

English Forests and Forest Trees, 1853.



For the Cherokee, oak is a plant of the East, the direction of beginnings, of birth and rebirth, opening to the entire cycle of life. Inner bark from the east side of the oak has ceremonial uses, and oak is the wood for sacred fires. For many Native American nations, oak is a powerful medicine: a tonic for renewal, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, antiseptic, and a potent remedy for loneliness and for “when your woman goes off and won’t come back.”

Oak is the mother tree for our whole region. She displays courage, endurance, generosity, steadfastness. No matter how often wounded, cut or chewed down, she returns. An oak savanna or opening is the richest temperate ecosystem on earth, always full of birds, animals, insects, fungi, and worms. Oak is the union of earth and sky, the *axis mundi*, still center of a turning world.

For me, oak is a sacred tree. We have six of them in our yard, three mature red oak and three young bur oak. Oak savanna is the original ecosystem of our neighborhood, as memorialized by the adjoining Oakwood Neighborhood and Oakland Drive, our main street. And back in 1835, around the time of the founding of Kalamazoo, oak savanna was the dominant ecosystem all across southern lower Michigan.

Oak tree etching Ladislav Hanka



Almost everywhere we turn in our city, we find the name Arcadia: a creek, a neighborhood, a beer, a festival site, a school, a college campus, a wide variety of businesses. With each naming, we invoke, mostly unawares, the “old oak forest” of Arcadia, in the Greek Peloponnesus, homeland of the nature god Pan and of pastoral song and story, the lost land and timeless dream of original simplicity, and eternal return.

We already live, here and now, in the landscape of fabled Arcadia, whether the tree-studded lawns we hope to supplant, or the native grasslands and oak openings we hope to restore. Our conventional neighbors and ourselves are very much alike. We both live in the faded dream of a lost culture, remembered in our labored restoration of the park-like Oak Openings maintained by our displaced Potawatomi predecessors, but mainly in suburbia’s diminutive replicas of 18th century parks and lordly estates, which were in turn artfully sculpted imaginings of ancient Arcadian pastoral landscapes.

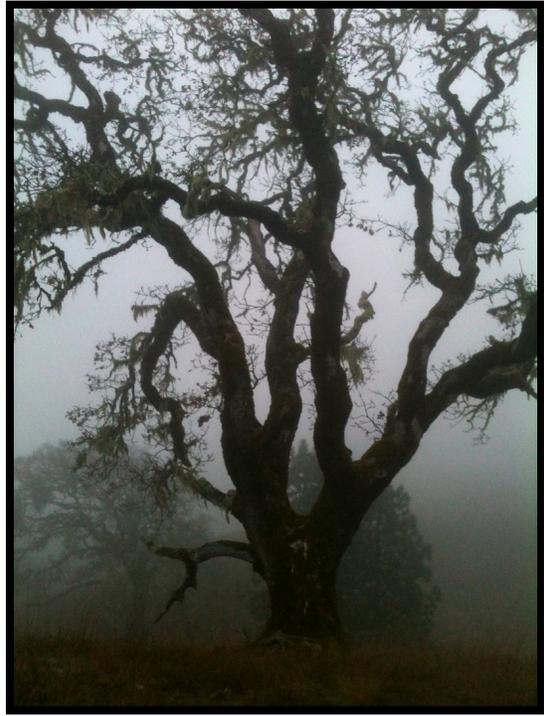
But we know not where we are, nor do we remember how we came to be here. Might our lives be different if we would pass some of our winter hours sharing, among ourselves and with our neighbors, stories of our cultural heritage, of times past, and passing, and to come?

Could we begin the month of January, Janus's own month, by invoking the ancient spirit of new beginnings, and an ancient time-honored oracle, the whisperings of oak trees in the wind? And could we vow to follow the injunction of our very own oak-seer, Doug Tallamy, and plant new oak trees this year, all in the spirit of prophecy?

Perhaps we would thus take a step through the open door of hope for the future, a new beginning in times of uncertainty and suffering, and a recovery of what we have lost—a culture, a history, and a sense of the sacred.

Shall we begin?

Oak in the mists of time. M. Luna



Overwintering Strategies of Insects: Potter Wasp

Ilse Gebhard

From years of nature study I have learned to be on the lookout for interesting insects anywhere, including the outside walls of dwellings. Moving to a Garden Home here at Friendship Village, I make it a point to look at the walls of our front porch. Who knows what interesting moth might be attracted to the porch light next to our front door that is on all night.



□□□□□ My looking paid off when in early August I discovered a very small (1/2 inch diameter) clay pot attached to our porch light. I could barely see that the pot contained what looked like two small, green caterpillars. I'm guessing they were the larval stage of a moth or sawfly that had been paralyzed and placed in the pot by one of a group of solitary wasps called "potter wasps," also known as mason wasps.

Clay pot with green caterpillars inside. I. Gebhard



After provisioning a pot and depositing an egg, these wasps then seal the top. Sure enough, the top was sealed two days after I first discovered the pot.

When the eggs hatch, the wasp larvae feed on the caterpillars for some time and then proceed to pupate, to emerge as adult wasps in spring. They will then feed on floral nectar.

Sealed clay pot with wasp larva inside. I. Gebhard



I have seen what I thought could be such a wasp nectaring on the flowers of the swamp milkweed that I have growing in pots by our front porch. Wasps like these are very beneficial for a variety of plants, including fruit trees that need insects for pollination.

Swamp milkweed (Asclepias incarnata) M. Luna

Librarian's Choice: Book List for 2022

Are you looking for a good book to curl up with? Books can give us a new perspective on the natural world and our place within it, and can give us hope and inspire us. With this in mind, we've compiled a list of a few we think you'll enjoy all year long! Monthly book reviews to come.

Anything by Doug Tallamy:

Nature of Oaks

Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants

Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens

Nature's Best Hope

Gathering Moss and *Braiding*

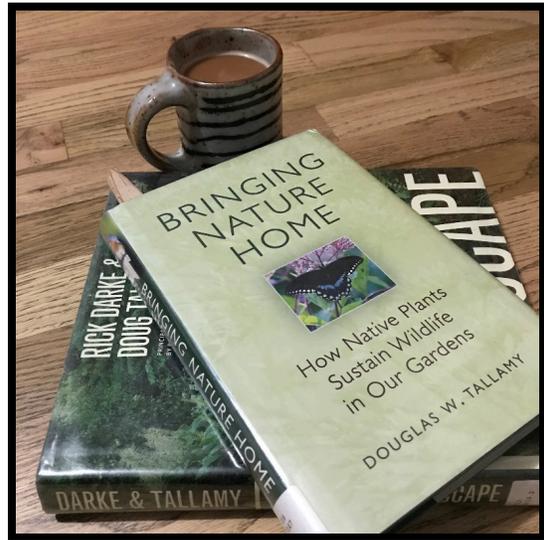
Sweetgrass by Robin Wall-Kimmerer

Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living

World by Linda Hogan

A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of

Migratory Birds by Scott Weidensaul



Nancy Lawson's *The Humane Gardener*

Noah's Garden by Sara Stein

John L. Riley's *The Once and Future Great Lakes*

The Death and Life of the Great Lakes by Dan Egan

Suzanne Simard's *Finding the Mother Tree:*

Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest

See Tom Small's review in last July's newsletter [here](#)



National Championship Trees in Southwest Michigan

Ilse Gebhard



The Champion Black Walnut (Juglans nigra) americanforests.org

The 2021 National Champion Tree Registry published by the nonprofit American Forests includes 563 tree species in the United States. Two of those are in Southwest Michigan! The Champion Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) is right here in Oshtemo Township and is 102 feet tall with a circumference of 20 feet. The Champion Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) is in Berrien County. While under 100 feet tall, it has a crown spread of 127 feet and a 27-foot trunk circumference. To see more trees in the official register (you can search by state), click on the link below.

<https://www.americanforests.org/champion-trees/champion-trees-registry/>

Community Events of Interest

January 9 - 2:00pm-3:00pm - KAWO is celebrating Tom Small! Please join us! Click [here](#) for the Zoom meeting details, or follow the link on our [website](#).

January 13 - 4:30pm - Social Hike at Bow in the Clouds Preserve with SWMLC. [Info](#)

January 17 - 9:00am-12:00pm - Celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King with a Day of Service at Bow in the Clouds Preserve! Volunteers receive a t-shirt and lunch coupon when you register through Gryphon Place. Learn more about the event [here](#).

January 19 - 7:00pm-8:00pm - KAWO Monthly Business Meeting. Are you interested in getting more involved with your local Wild Ones chapter? Meetings are open to members and are generally held on the third Wednesday of the month. [More info](#)

January 25 - 1:00pm-2:30pm - Free webinar hosted by Michigan Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) on best practices for erosion control along the lakeshore using nature-based solutions, including native plants. [Register here.](#)

January 26 - 7:00pm: "Choosing Plants for Pollinators" Rebecca Tonietto, Department of Biology, University of Michigan-Flint. *An online Zoom presentation from [KAWO](#).*

January 29 - 9:30am: Native Plant Propagation Workshop in partnership with WMU. Learn how to propagate native plants from seeds in this two-part in-person event. [More Info](#)

Editor's note: If you know of any local events pertaining to native plants that you feel may interest our readers, please send them along to us at the address below. Thanks!

What's Happening at the National Office

Check out our [National Office web site](#)

To read the most recent reports from the board of directors,

[Log In to the Member Only Area.](#)

Thank you for your interest and support of Wild Ones!

Not a member? [Click Here](#) for information on how you can support Wild Ones.

SEEDLINGS is edited by Mel Luna. It appears mostly monthly.

The next regular issue will arrive in early February. **Deadline for Feb issue is January 20.**

[Send Submission](#)

Contributing Editors:

Tom Small

Ilse Gebhard

To share comments and suggestions, simply reply to this email.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Find more information and news at www.KalamazooWildOnes.org

and www.Facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes



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